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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 002266

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INL/LP, WHA/CEN, AND WHA/PPC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT MADURO TALKS DRUGS IN COLOMBIA WHILE
POLICE NAB ANOTHER 20 KILOS

1. On September 16 President Maduro met with Colombian President Alvaro Uribe in Cartagena, Colombia to discuss better coordination between the two nations' counterdrug efforts. Honduras is a major transshipment zone for illicit narcotics making their way north from Colombia to U.S. shores, although drug use is growing rapidly within Honduras. This year, Honduras has experienced an alarming increase in illicit air-tracks, many of which originate from Colombia.

2. According to Honduran press reports, President Uribe assured Maduro that recent interdiction efforts coordinated with the USG should have a significant impact on the amount of illicit air-tracks originating from Colombia. (NOTE: Ostensibly, Uribe was referring to Colombia's new air bridge denial shoot-down policy. END NOTE) Uribe also indicated to Maduro that Colombia would increase counterdrug coordination with Honduras, but according to Minister of Defense Federico Breve, the details are yet to be worked out. (COMMENT: We understand from GOH officials this exchange was the first discussion of such cooperation between the two governments. END COMMENT)

3. In the interim, two more drug traffickers were arrested September 20 near the Copan ruins in possession of eleven kilos of cocaine, which police discovered hidden in the gas tank of one of the suspect's vehicles. Both suspects (Ilder Mejia and Wilmer Orlando Tabora) are Guatemalan citizens. Also confiscated were three cellular phones, a 45-caliber pistol, and some USD 1,940 in Honduran currency.

4. Honduran Frontier Police also made their first drug seizure at the INL funded Container Freight Tracking System (CFTS) facility in Pavana which opened this April. A routine search of a passenger bus which originated from Costa Rica yielded nine kilos of cocaine, dispersed among three Honduran passengers. The INL Canine Unit alerted police to the presence of the drugs.
PIERCE